Brown University
Honors in Comparative Literature

CALENDAR

FALL SEMESTER

**Mid-September:**
Honors Thesis workshop convened by the Director of Undergraduate Studies to guide students in the process.

**October 15:**
**Deadline** for submission of “Thesis Proposal form” (with title and 1-2 page abstract of project as well as names and signatures of thesis director and second reader).

**Mid-December:**
a **substantial portion of writing** on the thesis must be completed and submitted to the reader(s) (at least a chapter or a substantial piece of translation).

SPRING SEMESTER

**March 15:**
**Deadline** for submitting the full draft of the entire thesis.

**April 15:**
**Deadline** for submitting the final and complete version of the thesis. No extensions.

**Early May**
Short (7-min) oral presentations of your thesis at the CL Thesis forum.
Honors in Comparative Literature
Guidelines

Students may earn honors in the Comparative Literature concentration by successfully presenting an Honors thesis” (Tracks 1 & 2) or a “Translation senior project” (Track 3).

Eligibility
Honors candidates must normally earn more A's than B's in courses taken as part of the Comparative Literature concentration (or receive the equivalent faculty evaluation on a Course Performance Report for courses taken S/NC).

COLT 1990 “Senior Thesis Preparation”
Students normally enroll in COLT 1990 in either or both semesters of their senior year, which are in addition to the 10 required courses of any of our concentration tracks. (These courses may not be used to satisfy the standard requirements for a concentration). We recommend that students register S/NC in the Fall semester.

Registering for a section of COLT 1990
On the course search page, https://cab.brown.edu
Check “Include Independent Study” in your search for COLT courses
You will see a list of sections for COLT 1990 (Senior Thesis Preparation).
• If you have already identified a thesis director, register for his or her section
• If your thesis director does not have a section of the course, email the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) and we will have the Registrar set up one right away
• If you have not yet identified a thesis director, register for the DUS’s section

Capstone Option
Students not taking Honors are encouraged to complete a senior essay, which may be less extensive in scope and length than the Honors thesis, but which should constitute an integration of some aspect of their study.

Thesis Readers
Students are expected to have two readers for the honors thesis: a director and a second reader. One of them needs to be a member of the Comparative Literature faculty [see the faculty page on our website]. https://www.brown.edu/academics/comparative-literature/faculty

Thesis Evaluation
Honors in Comparative Literature is granted upon positive recommendation by the thesis readers. (Completing a thesis in any track does not guarantee departmental honors).

Thesis Forum
At the end of the Spring semester honors thesis writers will present their research results at the Comparative Literature Thesis Forum, to which all faculty and students will also be invited.

Thesis expenses
The department may be able to provide some funds for thesis-related expenses (for research materials and photocopying). Please check with the Director of Undergraduate Studies.
Honors Thesis guidelines

The honors thesis is usually **between 50 and 100 pages long**. It is anticipated that a **significant amount of research** will go into this project. Students are expected normally to choose a topic that involves work in each of the foreign literatures they have presented for their degree; such foreign materials are to be dealt with (i.e., read and cited) in the **original language**, even though the thesis itself is **generally written in English**. It is also anticipated that the project itself is to be of a **comparative nature**. In some cases, it may be possible for a student to devise a thesis project that meshes the thesis investigation with creative writing.

**Track 1-2 theses** usually comprised of 3 chapters, with an introduction and conclusion [as part of chapters or separate]; they’re cross-cultural, involving texts in all your languages for the concentration.

**Track 3 theses** will consist of:
1. A substantial work in translation (length will vary depending on language and genre); no prescriptions as to length of work translated because challenge-level of texts varies. Expectation: substantial chunk of a novel, selection of short stories, corpus of poems.
2. A critical introduction outlining the method used and specific problems encountered, and commenting on the history of the original work together with other translations, if any.

**Thesis Format**
Citations: all parenthetical references, footnotes, and bibliography must follow the MLA or the Chicago Style sheets.
Literary texts that are the subject of the thesis must be quoted in their original language. English translations should be provided (after the quotations or in footnotes).

**Final Copy will include:**
- a title page (see template on departmental website)
- an abstract of about 60 words
- a table of contents

(You may consult past senior theses archived in the departmental library in Prospect House).

**SUBMISSION OF THESIS**

**To your readers:**
You may submit your thesis to your readers in hard copy and/or electronically. Consult your readers about their preferences.

**To the department:**
1. One printed, bound copy of your thesis with a clear plastic cover
2. One electronic copy in a single MS word document. Title the document: “YOUR NAME, thesis.”

Electronic versions of the thesis will only be used for internal purposes in Comparative Literature and will **not** be otherwise circulated or available to the public.
ADVICE TO THESIS WRITERS

YOUR TOPIC
- Pick a general subject that will sustain your interest for half a year.
- Look for a specific question that intrigues you.
- Be patient with it: expect to find the answers later and by stages.
- If you have difficulty in coming up with one firm topic, jot down instead three or four hypothetical topics.
- Discuss those alternatives with faculty: your best option will gradually emerge.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR READERS
- First “think on paper” in order to generate ideas.
- Then visit several faculty members. Sound each of them out about your area of interest and the topic(s) you are considering.
- Prepare those meetings: outline your area of interest and your questions about it.
- Tell how well equipped you are to investigate your area and what skills you still need to hone for it.
- Bring along an annotated list of relevant courses that you have taken, seminar papers you have written, special skills you have.

HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR THESIS DIRECTOR
- “Bring your own agenda and questions to each meeting.”
- “At the end of each meeting, set a time and a specific task for the next meeting.”
- “Use brief regular meetings to keep your project on track.”
- “Try to do some brief informal writing for most meetings.” Bring along two copies.
- A tip on how to “prime the pump” for such writing: Whenever you complete a set of readings, write a bibliographic essay in which you delineate the most important items read. Outline the major points found by you in each author or critic, and also note your own responses.